

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY PORT MORESBY

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CINCPAC ALSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: NA

TAGS: OTRA, PGOV, PP

SUBJECT: SOMARE VISIT

1. WE ARE PREPARING AN AIRGRAM ON INDEPENDENCE CELEBRATIONS HELD HERE, BUT BELIEVE IT USEFUL TO PASS ON SOME INDICATION SPIRIT OF PROCEEDINGS WHICH MAY BE OF VALUE IN CONJUNCTION SOMARE VISIT.

2. THERE WAS LITTLE SUBSTANTIVE TRANSFER OF POWER ON SEPTEMBER 16, AUSTRALIA HAVING ALREADY LONG BEFORE TRANSFERRED ALL POWERS TO PNG EXCEPT IN NAME.

3. THE INDEPENDENCE CEREMONIES WHICH OCCURRED HERE, HOWEVER, WERE OF GREAT SIGNIFICANCE TO PNG GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS AND THOSE ASSOCIATED WITH THE FESTIVITIES. CEREMONY OF COURSE IS THOROUGHLY ENTWINED IN PNG TRADITIONAL VILLAGE CULTURE, AND MARKS EVERY IMPORTANT EVENT FROM BIRTH TO DEATH. THE NATIONHOOD RITE HELD
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HERE WAS AN EXTREMELY SERIOUS AFFAIR, AKIN TO THE

MANHOOD RITES IN TRADITIONAL VILLAGE SOCIETY WHICH NOT ONLY MARK THE ARRIVAL OF MATURITY, BUT FOR THE FIRST TIME GIVE THE YOUTH A POSITION OF STATUS WITHIN HIS CLAN. PNG AS HOST AND PRINCIPAL PARTICIPANT IN THESE RITES WOULD HAVE LOST FACE AND STATUS IF THE CEREMONIES HAD NOT GONE WELL, IF FOREIGN DIGNITARIES HAD NOT BEEN RECEIVED AND TREATED WITH COURTESY, DIGNITY AND HONOR.

4. ENORMOUS EFFORT WAS EXPANDED BY THE PNG GOVERNMENT, BY VARIOUS CIVIC GROUPS, AND BY PRIVATE CONCERNS AND INDIVIDUALS MONTHS IN ADVANCE TO MOUNT A SERIES OF INDEPENDENCE CEREMONIES AND EVENTS COMBINED TO HONOR TRADITIONS AS VARIOUS AS THOSE OF THE BRITISH ROYAL HOUSE, OF AUSTRALIA AND OF VILLAGE AND MODERN PNG, SO THAT EACH MAJOR GROUP COULD IDENTIFY WITH THE PROCEEDINGS. PARTICULAR ATTENTION WAS MADE TO SEE THAT FOREIGN DIGNITARIES WERE HONORED AND WELL CARED FOR. IN THIS THE PNG GOVERNMENT WAS MORE THAN SUCCESSFUL IF THE U.S. DELEGATION RESPONSE WAS ANY INDICATION. THE FACT THAT RANKING CABINET MEMBERS WERE SEATED WITH THE PRESS AT ONE OR MORE CEREMONIAL OCCASIONS TO ENSURE THAT THIRD OR FOURTH RANKING LEVELS OF FOREIGN DELEGATIONS WERE SEATED IN THE VIP SECTIONS IS AN INDICATION OF THE HOST-GUEST OBLIGATION FELT BY PNG. TO INSURE THAT EVENTS WENT WITHOUT INCIDENT THE SALE OF TAKE AWAY LIQUOR WAS CURTAILED TEN DAYS BEFORE INDEPENDENCE, HUNDREDS OF ADDITIONAL POLICE MUSHROOMED ON THE STREETS AND THE POPULACE WAS EXHORTED TO CLEAN UP THE CITY AND BE ON ITS BEST BEHAVIOR. THERE WAS NO VIOLENCE, OR VISABLE PUBLIC DRUNKENESS, AND THE CRIME RATE DROPPED SHARPLY.

5. AT THE SAME TIME THE EGALITARIAN TRADITION HERE REQUIRED THAT A HOST OF EVENTS, SPORTING, CULTURAL, DRAMATIC AND NUMEROUS EXHIBITS BE MOUNTED SO THAT AN EXTREMELY WIDE SLICE OF THE POPULACE WAS EITHER PARTICIPATING ACTIVELY OR WATCHING SOME FUNCTION THROUGHOUT THE ENTIRE PERIOD. LASTLY TO ENSURE THAT THE OUTLYING DISTRICTS AND VILLAGES WERE INCLUDED, A LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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ROYAL TOUR OF WEWAK, THE HIGHLANDS AND DARU TOOK PLACE ON THE SEVENTEENTH, AND OVERSEAS DIGNITARIES WERE ENCOURAGED TO VISIT OUTLYING DISTRICTS TO HELP OFFICIATE AT CELEBRATIONS THERE. ON THE 18TH THE DISTRICT COMMISSIONERS IN TURN WENT TO THE SUB-DISTRICTS AND VILLAGES TO OFFICIATE AT CELEBRATIONS.

6. THE POINT OF ALL THIS IS TO INDICATE THAT CEREMONIAL

MARKING OF EVENTS AND INDICATIONS OF RESPECT TOWARD
GUESTS, WHILE IMPORTANT IN MOST SOCIETIES ARE OF
PARAMOUNT VALUE HERE. IN MANY INSTANCES THE CEREMONY
IS VASTLY MORE SIGNIFICANT THAN THE SUBSTANCE UNDERLYING
THE CELEBRATION.

7. IN VIEWING THE SOMARE VISIT IT IS WELL TO KEEP THIS
TRADITION IN MIND, AND OUR ATTENTION TO THE NEWLY GAINED
ADULT STATUS OF PNG IN THE INTERNATIONAL CLAN WILL CARRY
US FAR IN OBTAINING OUR WAY ON POINTS OF SUBSTANTIVE
IMPORTANCE TO US WHICH MAY ARISE LATER.
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